

THE OBJECTIVE FORCE: TRANSFORMING TODAY'S CONCEPTS INTO TOMORROW'S JOINT WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

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"Absent innovative thought and a willingness to integrate social advancements, triumphant warrior systems frequently become fossilized in their moment of glory."

John Keegan
A History of Warfare

Introduction

The timeless quest for combat speed and mobility has prompted many historic army transformations. Approximately 2,400 years ago, Philip II reformed the Macedonian army. Seeking to gain the battlefield initiative through speed and mobility, Philip instituted new acquisition and logistics procedures that drastically restricted the traditional baggage train that followed armies of that era. His combat successes were legendary in the Greek world. Philip's military legacy passed to his young son, who went on to conquer an empire and establish himself as Alexander the Great.

America's Army has launched once again a search for strategic speed and mobility. More specifically, the Army's transformation effort seeks to develop new fighting doctrine, organizations, and capabilities designed to ensure the creation of a strategically responsive, agile, and

lethal Objective Force (OF). Tailored to become the 21st century's pre-eminent land power, the OF will perform a broad range of missions that will vary from the domestic challenges of homeland security to the complexities of decisive overseas warfighting.

On tomorrow's battlefield, the OF will deploy as a combined arms, full-dimensional maneuver force. Offensively oriented, the Objective Force will secure and maintain the combat initiative at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Now in its fourth year of development, the OF signals the Army's sustained commitment to become the cornerstone asset within every joint force commander's (JFC's) future campaign plan.

Charting The Joint Path

The Army is developing the blueprint for OF formations specifically tailored to support regional combatant commanders and emerging joint operational concepts. Synchronized with current DOD reform guidance, the Army's transformation efforts are responding to the goals articulated by the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Defense Planning Guidance, Joint Vision 2020, and the recently pub-

lished National Security Strategy. Designed for rapid response and deployment, the Objective Force will have the capability to conduct operational maneuver across strategic distances and become the decisive complement to air, sea, and space operations.

Guided by an aggressive concept development and experimentation strategy, the Army will be fully integrated into tomorrow's joint force. The OF will fulfill force requirements for strike capabilities that encompass both precision engagement and precision maneuver. These Army units will create combat synergy within joint task forces by controlling people, resources, and large areas of land and by rapidly defeating opponents regardless of terrain conditions.

Evolution

The conceptual roots for the OF reach across the Atlantic Ocean into the historic hallways of General Headquarters, London, England. In the spring of 1918, British Army Major General J.F.C. (John Frederick Charles) Fuller became impressed with the immature technology of the internal combustion engine. Emphasizing the characteristics of speed, maneuverability, adaptability, and

self-sufficiency during the attack, Fuller developed his ideas in a proposal that became known as *Plan 1919*. Today's Army planners, like Fuller, seek to examine innovative technologies, formulate concepts, experiment with new capabilities, and catch a glimpse of future battlefields as modern technology again alters fighting capabilities.

More than 3 years ago, the Army's transformation journey required an examination of combat units according to their warfighting purpose. This analysis resulted in the development and recent publication of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-90. Focusing on the years 2010 through 2020, this proposed operational and organizational plan describes future formations within the framework of two organizations delineated by their combat purpose: Units of Employment (UEs) and Units of Action (UAs). The operational-level headquarters function will be embedded within UEs while UAs will perform tactical roles.

The UE will analyze the situation and shape and isolate the battlespace while synchronizing major operations and decisive land campaigns in support of joint operational and strategic objectives. This senior command and control unit will participate in all phases of joint operations, from initial entry through conflict termination and the transition to post-conflict operations.

The UE will be capable of providing command and control for joint and multinational forces as described by JFC's Standing Joint Force Headquarters concept. Additionally, UE Headquarters will have the inherent capability to interact effectively with interagency, multinational, nongovernmental, and private organizations.

OF units, as an essential component of joint operations, will be capable of strategic missions such as

forcible entry operations to defeat critical targets and assist in assuring access for follow-on forces. By being capable of air- and sealift to unimproved ports along multiple paths, OF units will contribute to overcoming anti-access challenges and directly assist the JFC objectives through dislocation, disintegration, and destruction.

Completed research and analysis has also focused on the development of UAs. The UA will become the capstone combat element within the Army's Objective Force. It will be strategically responsive and provide overmatching lethality with advanced survivability against any threat. The Unit of Action will also be able to transition rapidly between tactical engagements with minimal organizational adjustment. By leveraging information technology advances, these units will be versatile and responsive to the JFC's assigned missions.

A vital component of the emerging UA is the development of the Future Combat Systems (FCS). It is the single critical system-of-systems solution to the UA as described in detail within the FCS Operational Requirements Document. However, the UA will encompass more than a new combat platform. By harnessing the synergy from acquisition, logistics, and technology reforms coupled with revised Doctrine, Training, Leader development, Organizations,

People, and Facilities efforts, the UA will be prepared to significantly contribute to security policy goals that seek to assure allies, dissuade adversaries, deter aggression, and decisively defeat any opponent.

A New Equation

Finding the new formula for war is neither quick nor easy. The rational calculus of military strategy requires a continuous, thoughtful correlation of ways, means, and ends. Each stage of progression in the art of war anchors on past experience while integrating modern social, political, and technological advances. As the march of scientific discovery continues unabated, there will be a direct relationship between the evolution of national security policy, emerging technology, and the transformation of America's Army.

The Objective Force will seek to achieve a situational dominance and decisionmaking momentum that will establish a new equation for the application of force. To facilitate this change, the Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) were developed as an intermediate step toward UAs. Many of the current adaptations the Army is making to field SBCTs are precursors to institutional and operational changes that will be reflected within the Army's transformation to the OF. The SBCTs will not only provide a unique Army capability that responds to near-term operational requirements, but will also become an experimental laboratory for testing concepts and fielding future advanced capabilities.

Tomorrow's battlespace will be distributed, noncontiguous, and more vertical than linear. Lines of communication will evolve into web-like network configurations. The Objective Force will be able to strike globally and achieve decisive results. These outcomes will be predicated on the ability to perform operational maneuvers from strategic distances

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Seeking to retain the combat initiative while avoiding the vulnerabilities and time penalty associated with traditional employment phases, the OF will avoid large, fixed-air terminals and seaports. On arrival, UAs will immediately be able to conduct operations. While sustaining simultaneous and continuous day and night operations, the Objective Force will either destroy the enemy or force opposing units to abandon protective sanctuaries and face destruction by precision fires.

Today's Forces

Today's forces generally fight linear, sequential engagements that are driven by system constraints rather than campaign design. At the tactical level, fire and maneuver frequently become distinct events. Lack of intelligence and situational awareness requires cautious actions in the early stages of an operation. This battlefield uncertainty often demands exploratory movement to contact against the enemy. Once an opponent is discovered, the integration of fire and maneuver frequently causes tactical pauses. These delays often reduce momentum while increasing casualties.

The Unit of Action will demonstrate a seamless integration of fire and maneuver. Using a complex network of fires in conjunction with precision maneuver, the UA will be able to achieve battlefield dominance from either stand-off ranges or close battle. Each UA will be able to execute multiple engagements simultaneously or in rapid succession across a large area of operation.

A Sense Of Urgency

Past success, unfortunately, does not ensure victory on tomorrow's battlefield. There is a sense of

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urgency to develop these leap-ahead concepts and capabilities. Because the past rhythm of the transformation cycle generally takes military organizations 15 or more years to execute, time is of the essence. A heuristic approach to future warfare, guided by the wisdom of past experience, will yield a sense of understanding as the first clues are deciphered and the hidden formulas for future victory discovered.

Conclusion

During times of security crisis, land-power becomes a vital force projection capability and one of the key pillars of America's military power. For more than a century, there has been a symbiotic relationship between America's world status and America's Army. In an increasingly uncertain security environment, Army forces will become an indispensable signal of American political determination. Tomorrow's challenges will vary significantly. On one extreme, rogue or failing states with common access to space and conventional weapons may become sophisticated opponents capable of integrating the complex realms of a surface-to-space battlefield continuum. Conversely, the menace may not be fleets or armies but rather the unsophisticated rifles and car bombs of determined terrorists. With a multitude of possibilities between these

two extremes, the shape and outline of future warfare environments will require flexible, adaptable Army units. The Objective Force, organized with Units of Employment and Units of Action, will be capable of responding across this diverse array of military operations.

The rhythms of history and the cycles of war, without question, are altering where, when, and how America's Army will serve this Nation. It is only a matter of time until America's national resolve is again tested. When that challenge arrives, a transformed Army will be the commander's primary instrument for decisive operations. The development of Objective Force capabilities clearly demonstrates the Army's commitment to ignore the siren call that has fossilized so many historic battlefield victors. America's Army is aggressively seeking to transition from its Cold War, forward-deterrent posture to a strategically responsive member of tomorrow's joint warfighting team.

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